

Muḥyī l-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī

Muḥyī l-Dīn al-‘Ajāmī al-Iṣfahānī

DATE OF BIRTH Unknown
PLACE OF BIRTH Unknown; possibly Iṣfahān
DATE OF DEATH Possibly 12th century
PLACE OF DEATH Unknown

BIOGRAPHY

We have little information about this author, who is called *shaykh* and *imām*. On account of his outspoken preference for the West Syrian doctrine on the Incarnation against the position of the other Christian communities, he must have belonged to the West Syrian (Jacobite) community, though Spath and Graf (but the latter also refers to his ‘monophysite’ convictions) tend to consider him rather as an East Syrian author on account of his presumed Persian origins. As for his dates, he knew the work of Iliyyā of Nisibis (d. 1046 [q.v.]; see Samir, ‘Muḥyī ad-Dīn’, p. 226), while one of his works is preserved in a manuscript of 1310 (Troupeau, *Catalogue*, i, pp. 169-71), so he must have lived between these two times.

MAIN SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Primary

Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, *Ashraf al-ḥadīth fī sharafay al-tawḥīd wa-l-tathlīth*, ed. Allard and Troupeau (see below), pp. 31-32, 52

Secondary

[S.]K. Samir, ‘Muḥyī ad-Dīn al-‘Ajāmī al-Iṣfahānī’, in ‘Bibliographie’, *Islamochristiana* 2 (1976) 201-42, pp. 226-27

G. Troupeau, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes. Première partie, Manuscrits chrétiens*, 2 vols, Paris, 1972-74, i, pp. 169-71

Graf, *GCAL* ii, pp. 157 and 259

L. Cheikho, ‘Catalogue raisonnée des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Orientale’, *Mélanges de l’Université St-Joseph* 14 (1929), 385-440, no. 47

WORKS ON CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

Ashraf al-ḥadīth fī sharafay al-tawḥīd wa-l-tathlīth, 'The noblest speech about the noble [doctrines of God's] Unity and Trinity'DATE Possibly 12th century

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Arabic

DESCRIPTION

This work is divided into six chapters, dealing with the Trinity (chs 1-3) and Incarnation (chs 4-6).

In the Trinitarian part, the author first (ch. 1) discusses the various meanings of the term *uqnūm*, 'hypostasis', as used by Christian theologians. In ch. 2, he presents brief refutations of each of these various meanings, and in ch. 3 explains his own view, which according to Allard and Troupeau emphasizes God's unicity while his Trinitarian aspect amounts *de facto* to a form of modalism, the distinction into hypostases being a reality only in the human mind rather than in the divine substance itself.

In chs 4-6, the author explains the Christological views and terminology of the three main Christian communities: Melkites, Nestorians, and Jacobites. Some formulations seem to echo questions of Muslim scholars.

The work, which betrays influences from Yaḥyā ibn 'Adī, seems to have been written for an unidentified Muslim reader.

SIGNIFICANCE

This treatise is a clear example of the way Christians tried to explain their belief in the Trinity and Incarnation in philosophical terms that were common to themselves and Muslims.

MANUSCRIPTS

MS Leiden, University Library – Or. 1290, pp. 286-336 (15th century)

MS Beirut, Bibliothèque Orientale – 668 (19th century; 15 pages)

MS Beirut, Bibliothèque Orientale – 669, pp. 57-68 (19th century)

MS Paris, BNF – Ar. 4786, f. 99 (19th century; fragment)

MS Aleppo, Rūfā'il Rabbāṭ Collection (inaccessible MS in private collection; see Sbath, *Fihris* i, p. 63, no. 512)

EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS

M. Allard and G. Troupeau (eds), *Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, Épître sur l'unité et la trinité. Traité sur l'intellect. Fragment sur l'âme* (*Recherches de l'Institut de Lettres Orientales* 20), Beirut, 1962, pp. 1-54 (ed. on the basis of the Leiden MS, with French trans.)

STUDIES

Samir, 'Muḥyī ad-Dīn al-ʿAḡamī al-Iṣfahānī', pp. 226-27

Troupeau, *Catalogue*, ii, p. 36 (on MS 4786, no. 8)

Allard and Troupeau, *Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī*, Introduction, pp. ix-xxi

Graf, *GCAL* ii, pp. 157, 259

Cheikho, 'Catalogue raisonnée', no. 47

Kalām fī l-ʿaql wa-l-ʿāqil wa-l-maʿqūl,
 'Discourse on the Intellect, the Intelligent,
 and the Intelligible'

DATE Possibly 12th century

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Arabic

DESCRIPTION

This is a short treatise that attempts to demonstrate, following two ways of argumentation, that the Creator and 'God of the world' is 'intellect, intelligent, and intelligible'. The author uses a terminology that he probably borrowed from Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī, who employed it in a philosophical demonstration of the Trinity. Although the recipient of this treatise is not mentioned, it seems that the author had a Muslim reader in mind.

SIGNIFICANCE

This short treatise provides an example of an attempt to explain the concept of the Trinity with the help of philosophical categories that would be familiar to both Christians and Muslims.

MANUSCRIPTS

MS Paris, BNF – Ar. 202, fols 36v-37v (1310)

MS Aleppo, Qusṭanṭīn Khudārī Collection (inaccessible MS in private collection, lost; see Sbath, *Fihris* i, p. 63, no. 513)

EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS

Allard and Troupeau, *Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Işfahānī*, pp. 55-61 (edition on the basis of the Paris MS, with French trans.)

STUDIES

Samir, 'Muḥyī ad-Dīn al-‘Ağamī al-Işfahānī', p. 227

Troupeau, *Catalogue*, i, pp. 169-71 (MS 202, no. 4)

Allard and Troupeau, *Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Işfahānī*, Introduction, p. xiii

Graf, *GCAL* ii, pp. 159, 259

Risāla ilā aḥad fuqahā' al-muslimīn, 'Epistle to a Muslim legal scholar'

DATE Possibly 12th century

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Arabic

DESCRIPTION

According to Sbath (*Fihris* i, p. 63), this treatise is a refutation of Islam. There is no way of knowing more about it until the MS should become accessible.

SIGNIFICANCE

It is not possible to say what the significance of the work is.

MANUSCRIPTS

MS Aleppo, Qusṭanṭīn Khuḍarī Collection (inaccessible MS in private collection, lost; see Sbath, *Fihris* i, p. 63, no. 514)

EDITIONS & TRANSLATIONS —

STUDIES —

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